Lambda Letters Project

32617

Vol. 8, No. 2 February, 2000 www.lambdaletters.org LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 965-6851

The Fundamental Issues

Lavender Library, Archives and Cultural Exchange Sacramento, CA

by Boyce Hinman, Administrator

If we are to truly change society, we must combat the discomfort, fear, and confusion that is at the root not only of the oppression of queers, but of women as well. In order to have an effective movement, we must not downplay our sexuality; rather, we must remember that sexuality and desire are wondrous mysteries, gifts to be celebrated that give ourselves the power to transform ourselves and the world.

—Karen Bullock-Jordan, *This Is What a Lesbian Looks Like* (Firebrand Books, 1999)

The quote above is strong stuff, but it rings true to me. The issue at hand is this: do we win rights as fully open and celebrated homosexuals and transgendered folk or do we do so by appearing as straight and gender-appropriate as possible? The fundamental reason for this latter strategy appears to be that being openly sexual, and or obviously transgendered, will offend some of the people (including legislators) whose support we need to obtain our rights.

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Register to Vote on March 7th

Registration Deadline is February 7th

On March 7th we have a golden opportunity to defeat Proposition 22, the Knight Initiative. But to do so will require discipline on the part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community and its supporters.

Proposition 22 is the initiative that would define marriage as being between a man and a woman. It is an attempt to prevent California from having to recognize same-sex marriages that might occur legally in another state. Similar laws in other states have been used to oppose domestic partner benefits in those states. In any case, a win on the Knight Initiative would encourage our opponents to go on the offensive to tear down the other rights and recognitions that queer folk in California have fought so hard to obtain.

Recent Field Polls show 51 percent of the voters support the Knight Initiative, 40 percent oppose it, and 9 percent are undecided. The margin will probably narrow by March 7th.

If our community can take a disciplined approach and get all the troops to the polls on election day,

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

November, 1999	2,057 letters & e-mails
In all of 1999	190,361 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

December, 1999	$1,512
In all of 1999	$19,562

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Mission Statement

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

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Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue, quarter-page ads $20 per issue, half-page ads $30 per issue, full-page ads $50 per issue. Deadline for payment and camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, is the 25th of each month.

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Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Issue

No Discrimination Against Transgendered People

by Christopher Calhoun

Everyone knows the old joke: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." The same could be said of our approach in many of our civil rights struggles. There are those who say "a Republican-dominated Congress will never protect transgendered people." But our position at Lambda Letters is to eat the elephant one bite at a time.

One way to approach that first bite is to lobby individual legislators to revise their office's Equal Employment Opportunity policies so that they include gender—and making sure that gender is defined broadly enough to include the range of people in the transgendered community. A similar approach has proven to be an effective way to publicize and gather support for employment nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In just a few years, the number of legislators on Capitol Hill who have committed themselves to not discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation is 317—a majority.

People who do not conform to traditional expectations and stereotypes of gender report significantly higher levels of economic discrimination than those who do. UCLA researcher Dr. Emilia L. Lombardi showed in her recent research on one category of transgendered people—transsexual people—that they are three times as likely to experience some form of economic discrimination as nontranssexual people.

In addition, much of the discrimination we've come to think of as sexual orientation–related discrimination is actually based on gender difference. In a survey conducted by NGLTF, GenderPAC, and NCLR, for example, 28 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people reported that they were discriminated against in employment—*not* because of their sexual orientation, but *because they expressed their gender nontraditionally.* This key piece of research illuminates the importance for LGBT people of supporting an expansive definition of gender in all nondiscrimination laws and policies.

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HIV/AIDS Issue

Advocacy for HIV/AIDS Funding

by Carolynn Race

On September 30, 2000, the United States could be without the Ryan White CARE (Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency) Act. The CARE Act, a lifeline for many people living with HIV and AIDS, "sunsets"—that is, ends—on that date unless reauthorized by Congress. Advocates in California are determined to ensure that this act is indeed reauthorized.

AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) is organizing a state legislative initiative to help ensure that the CARE Act is reauthorized. APLA and other interested organizations and individuals are supporting an Assembly Joint Resolution, in which the State Assembly and State Senate would urge the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the CARE Act expeditiously. Authored by Assemblymember Gil Cedillo (D–Los Angeles), the resolution seeks to ensure that resources are available to meet the expanding medical care and support-service needs of individuals living with HIV disease.

In California, as of January 1, 1999, more than 110,000 cases of the expanding pandemic known as AIDS have been reported. Although advances in medical treatment have meant a decline in death rates, the number of new HIV infections has remained at about the same level—approximately 8,000 new infections a year in California.

Since its inception, the Ryan White CARE Act has ensured the delivery of medical care and treatment as well as essential support services to tens of thousands of Californians. It is recognized as a critical safety-net program for low-income, uninsured (or underinsured) individuals.

Given the extensive and ongoing needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS, we sincerely hope that you will write to your legislators and encourage them to co-author Assemblymember Cedillo's Assembly Joint Resolution, which urges Congress to expeditiously reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act.

If you know of organizations interested in co-sponsoring this resolution, please have them contact Herb Schultz, Director of Government Affairs, AIDS Project Los Angeles, at (323) 993-1365 or by e-mail at hschultz@apla.org. ✉

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Women's Issue

Support Health Plan Disclosure

by Boyce Hinman

AB 525 by Sheila Kuehl (D–Encino) is a very important bill, which ensures that women have adequate information about reproductive service as they are choosing a health care provider. We hope you will support this important bill with your letters

The fundamental purpose of AB 525 was to ensure that women got essential reproductive and family planning services from their insurance providers. It was a very controversial bill and was defeated in the Assembly.

However, Assemblymember Kuehl has negotiated with many parties and now thinks she is close (at the deadline for this newsletter) to getting Assembly approval of a revised version of the bill. When it is passed and sent to the Senate, it will be assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. We would like you to send a letter to a member of that committee, urging a yes vote on AB 525.

As revised, the bill addresses the problem of the increasing mergers in the hospital industry. Many hospitals are being taken over by religiously controlled organization that have moral objections to the provision of reproductive services, such as tubal ligations, contraception, and other family planning services and, when necessary, abortions.

All that the revised bill will do is require that hospitals and disability plans that provide health care services clearly state what family planning and reproductive services they do and do not provide. This information would have to be provided in all their literature and would use language of a standard statement created by the State Department of Managed Care in consultation with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

The whole purpose of AB 525 is simply to ensure that women have a clear picture of what reproductive and family planning services they can get from each insurer as they decide which one to choose for their health insurance.

Please send your letter of support for AB 525 as soon as possible so we can ensure passage of this important legislation. ✉

People of Color Issue

An Executive Order to End Racial Profiling

by Marty Martinez

Racial profiling is the practice of identifying persons of particular races—most often blacks or Latinos—and singling them out for searches, traffic stops, or other law enforcement activities. The practice is commonly called "driving while black," although it happens in more circumstances than traffic stops. Racial profiling occurs often because police departments assume people of color are more likely to commit crimes, or because they are looking for particular suspects and the only information they have on the suspect is his or her race. The practice is repugnant because people are stopped or searched solely on the basis of their race.

Racial profiling has become an issue in the current presidential campaign. In a debate in Iowa sponsored by the Black-Brown Coalition, a group representing the voices of people of color, Democratic candidates Bill Bradley and Vice President Al Gore were asked to take positions on racial profiling. Both were against it and promised to sign executive orders that would ban federal law enforcement agencies from engaging in the practice. Bradley further challenged Gore to urge his boss, President Clinton, to sign such an order now.

Lambda Letters takes no position in the presidential primary, but Bradley's challenge to Gore gives us an opportunity to highlight the issue of racial profiling and encourage President Clinton to sign such an executive order. Although racial profiling is more generally an issue for local and state law enforcement, a federal executive order banning the practice for federal law enforcement would send a powerful signal to local and state elected officials to end the practice in their jurisdictions. Please sign the enclosed letter to President Clinton, urging him to take immediate action on this issue. ✉

Don't Know Who Represents You?
Send your request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and we'll send you a complete list of your elected officials. Or go to www.lambdaletters.org to find out who represents you.

February Legislative Update

The following is the list of important state bills that we are aware of at this time.

There are some things you should know about the legislature's process and the deadlines that affect the bills we care about.

First of all, this year is really the second half of a two-year legislative session that began in January, 1999. Under the legislature's rules, each legislator can introduce no more than 30 bills in a two-year session. As noted in our last newsletter, Lambda Letters is seeking the introduction of three bills this year. We went to several legislators, urging them to introduce the bills but frequently were told that the legislators had already used up most of their quota of bills and needed to save their remaining bills for issues of broader concern to their districts.

Whenever a legislator wants to introduce a bill, he or she sends the concept of the bill to the Legislative Counsel's office. That office then creates the actual bill with all the necessary wording. Under the legislature's rules, all requests for bills had to be in the Legislative Counsel's office no later than January 21st. In one case, a legislator submitted a request just as a courtesy to us even though he will not be carrying the bill; he helped us beat the deadline. Requests for our other two bills have been sent to the Legislative Counsel's office by legislators who will probably introduce them.

The next deadline for any new bills this year is February 25th. Any new bill must be introduced prior to that date or it cannot be considered by the legislature this year. None of our three bills has been introduced at the time this article was prepared in late January. However, Assemblymember John Longville (D–San Bernardino) has agreed to introduce our bill to clarify court procedures for transsexuals seeking court recognition of their new sex.

In the following list of bills, you will see some of them described as two-year bills. These are bills that were introduced in 1999 but were neither approved by the full legislature nor defeated in that year. Any bills introduced in 1999 and still in their house of origin must be approved by that house no later than January 31st or they will be dead for this year. For example, a bill number beginning with AB that is still in the Assembly must be approved by the Assembly by January 31st.

Here is the list of bills.

HIV/AIDS Issues

AB 16 (Mike Honda, D–San Jose)
Purpose: Under current law the state and counties split the costs of providing publicly funded in-home supportive services for aged blind and disabled persons. However, if the counties or the agencies they contract with to provide the services grant a pay raise to the workers providing the care, the counties must foot the whole cost of the raise. This bill changes the law to say that even these pay raises will be funded equally by the state and the counties. Note: The budget just passed allows the state to pay 50 cents of any pay raise. The author is still pushing this bill to get the state to pay 50 percent of any pay raise.
Status: Passed by the Assembly. Is a two-year bill in the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file. Probably will not be voted on by the committee till May.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 142 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require that every health care service plan provide medical care in accordance with accepted medical practices and provide emergency health care services, and to ensure confidentiality of the medical information of an enrollee. Plans must provide access to a wide variety of primary health care providers and specialty health care providers to ensure that the enrollee is able to choose a qualified doctor or other health care provider.
Status: Approved by the Assembly. Is a two-year bill in the Senate suspense file. Probably will not be voted on by the committee till May.
LLP Position: Support.

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Deborah A. Brooks
Certified Public Accountant

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February Legislative Update

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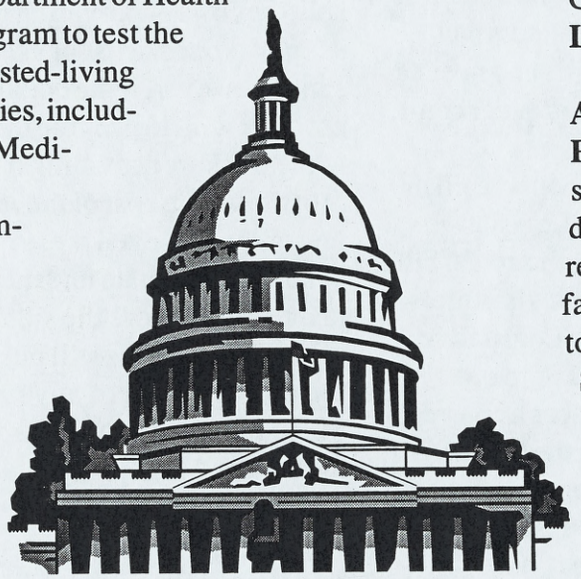
AB 306 (Ellen Corbett, D–Hayward)
Purpose: Creates the California Methamphetamine Reduction and Rehabilitation Fund through a tax on certain chemicals. The funds would provide grants to community-based groups and non-profit health clinics that provide drug treatment and rehabilitation. Targets HIV-positive people and others.
Status: In Assembly Appropriations Committee. Must be approved by that committee and the full Assembly no later than January 31st.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 499 (Dion Aroner, D–Berkeley)
Purpose: Requires the state Department of Health Services to establish a pilot program to test the effectiveness of providing an assisted-living benefit to low-income beneficiaries, including those with AIDS, under the Medi-Cal program.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Must pass the full Assembly no later than January 31st.
LLP Position: Support



AB 591 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: Requires health care service plans and certain disability insurers to cover routine patient costs related to treatment in a clinical trial of experimental medications.
Status: Is in the Senate Appropriations Committee. No action expected until June.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1592 (Dion Aroner, D–Berkeley)
Purpose: To authorize adults who meet certain qualifications, and who have been determined by their attending physicians to have a terminal illness, to request medication for the termination of their lives with dignity. Protects health care professionals from criminal prosecution or professional discipline for participating in good faith compliance with the act.
Status: Is in the Assembly Inactive file. Assemblymember Aroner is deciding whether or not to move the bill. It must be approved by the Assembly by January 31st or it dies.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1722 (Martin Gallegos, D–City of Industry)
Purpose: Previously passed legislation says that health care service plans can't stop covering a medication for a patient while the patient is under treatment for a particular ailment for which that drug has been prescribed. This legislation adds that the health care provider cannot increase the copayment or other deductible for the medication during the course of treatment of a disease for which the medication has been prescribed.
Status: Was introduced in early January. Will probably be heard in the Assembly Health Committee in March.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1730 (Nell Soto, D–Ontario)
Purpose: Requires every health care service plan to approve, modify, or deny, within 24 hours, a request for referral to a specialist for a patient facing an imminent and serious threat to his or her health.
Status: Introduced in early January. Will probably be referred to the Assembly Health Committee for hearing in March.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 848 (John Vasconcellos, D–San Jose)
Purpose: Requires the state Department of Health Services to establish a voluntary program for the issuance of identification cards to qualified patients and would establish procedures under which those patients may use marijuana for medical purposes.
Status: Passed the Senate. Is a two-year bill on the floor of the Assembly. No action on the bill is expected soon.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1258 (Richard Polanco, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require California to solicit approval from the federal government for California to provide Medi-Cal coverage to individuals who are HIV-positive, but who do not have AIDS. Current federal

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regulations limit the provision of Medi-Cal to people who have AIDS or who are otherwise disabled.
Status: Passed by the Senate. Is a two-year bill in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The author is negotiating with others to find changes in the bill needed to get enough votes to pass the bill. No votes on the bill are expected for a couple of months.
LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Issues

AB ???? (John Longville, D–San Bernardino) [Bill number not yet assigned.]
Purpose: Provides directions to California courts as to how to process petitions from post-operative transsexuals for recognition of their new sex and new, gender-appropriate name.
Status: Introduced in late January. Probably will be referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee.
LLP Position: Lambda Letters is a sponsor of the bill.

AB 107 (Wally Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Assemblymember Knox is considering a total rewrite of this bill. It may end up with an entirely different purpose.
Status: Passed by the Assembly. Stuck in the Senate. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Watch to see what its new purpose is.

AB 901 (Wally Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To exempt domestic partner health care benefits from state income taxes.
Status: This bill is dead. However, Assemblymember Knox is considering introducing a new bill with similar provisions.
LLP Position: Support.

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AB 1712 (Jim Cunneen, R–Campbell)
Purpose: To provide the death penalty for intentionally killing a victim because of his or her actual or perceived gender, disability, or sexual orientation.
Status: Introduced in January. Probably will be referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee.
LLP Position: Oppose unless death penalty is removed from the bill.

SB 118 (Tom Hayden, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require employers to grant family and medical leave to employees who need to care for their domestic partners.
Status: Passed by the Senate and the Assembly. Returned to the Senate for concurrence with changes made in the Assembly.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 850 (Tom Hayden, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To add to those protected by California's hate crimes statute people who experience hate crimes because of their association with targeted persons or groups listed in the hate crimes statute. (For example, the heterosexual parents of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered person.)
Status: Failed in the Senate Public Safety Committee. Senator Hayden is considering introduction of a similar bill this year.
LLP Position: Support.

People of Color Issues

SB 66 (Kevin Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: Existing law requires the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to develop and disseminate training for police officers, including instruction on racial and cultural diversity, in order to foster mutual respect and cooperation between law enforcement and members of all racial and cultural groups. This bill additionally would require the commission to develop guidelines that California law enforcement agencies would be required to adopt for the purpose of establishing race-neutral criminal profiles.
Status: Senator Murray does not plan to push the bill. It appears the POST Commission is willing to draft the necessary guidelines without the need for legislation.
LLP Position: Support.

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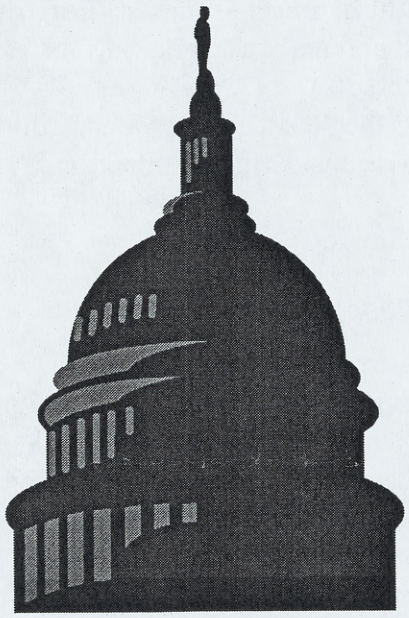
SB 672 (Martha Escutia, D–Montebello)
Purpose: Requires the state to establish a grant program to provide outreach and health services to children of migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families.
Status: Is a two-year bill in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Must be passed by that Committee and the full Senate no later than January 31st.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1326 (Tom Hayden, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Requires the State Department of Education to develop a human relations school curriculum addressing racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other forms of bigotry. Requires that school districts include the curriculum in their required course of study.
Status: Will be voted on in the Senate Education Committee on February 9th.
LLP Position: Support.



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Women's Issues

AB 40 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To establish the Breast Cancer Treatment Program for purposes of providing breast cancer treatment services to uninsured and underinsured women with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Also to require the State Department of Health Services to administer the program only when the Legislature has appropriated funds for the program.
Status: Passed by the Assembly. Is in the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Probably will not be voted on in that committee until summer.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 398 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To authorize the sale of bonds to provide funds for government-backed affordable housing.
Status: Is in the Senate Housing and Community Development Committee. Assemblymember Migden is negotiating changes needed to get it approved by that committee. It may get a committee vote in March.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 525 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Encino)
Purpose: To require hospitals and disability plans which provide health care services to include information in their promotional materials as to what family planning and reproductive services they provide. This will allow women to make informed decisions when determining which health plan to select.
Status: Was to be voted on in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on January 27th (after the deadline for this newsletter). The author's staff expects the bill to be approved by the committee and by the full Assembly and be sent to the Senate. If that does not happen by January 31st, the bill will be dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 193 (Joe Baca, D–San Bernardino)
Purpose: Existing law provides for the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund. Ninety percent of the moneys in the Breast Cancer Research Account is allocated to the Breast Cancer Research Program created at the University of California. This bill would require the State Department of Health Services to offer for sale breast cancer license plates to be sold at a price determined by the department, with the

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proceeds to be deposited into the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund.
Status: Was passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Approved by the Assembly Transportation Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Assemblymember Baca recently won election to the House of Representatives. We will watch to see if his bill is adopted by another legislator.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1154 (Jackie Speier, D–Daly City)
Purpose: Would enact the California Breast and Gynecological Cancer Treatment Program, administered by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, to provide treatment services to low-income, underinsured women.
Status: Passed the Senate and its Assembly policy committee. Senator Speier is negotiating with the governor's office seeking his support. There may be a vote on the bill in late March or April in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support. ✉

LGBT Issue

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Federal laws do not protect transgendered people from discrimination; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not protect transgendered people. Some state and municipal governments have passed laws that prohibit discrimination against transgendered people, including the state of Minnesota and such cities as San Francisco; Louisville, Kentucky; and Olympia, Washington.

California does not yet protect transgendered people from discrimination in employment, housing, or public accommodations, although an effort is being made to place such a bill with an author's office, and Lambda Letters stands ready with other statewide and local groups to sponsor it actively.

California does currently employ a thorough and trans-inclusive definition of gender in its hate crimes laws and its education nondiscrimination laws.

ENDA, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, which would provide federal protection against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, does not, as currently written, include gender—another reason to begin the process of education now. ✉

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Retirement: The Hidden Domestic Partner Benefit

It has come to the attention of Lambda Letters that for several years the California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) has been offering what amounts to a domestic partner retirement benefit to state employees. The benefit may also be available to employees of California local governments that are the part of the PERS system. Not all local governments have joined PERS. Local government employees may check with their personnel office to see whether their employer is part of the PERS system and if the retirement benefit described in this article is available to them.

Here is how it is with state employees. Just before a state employee retires, he or she is asked to select an option for payment of the monthly retirement check. The options available to employees who are not married are Options 1, 2, 2W, 3, or 3W.

Under Option 1, the employee receives a stated amount from the date of retirement until death. The stated amount will vary with the employee's length of service, salary at retirement, etc. Under the other options, the employee agrees to accept a slightly smaller monthly check in return for a promise from the state. The state promises to provide the same monthly payment to a specified beneficiary for the rest of the beneficiary's life, if the retiree dies first. The monthly payments vary among these other options because, with some of them, the monthly benefit to the retiree may increase if the beneficiary dies before the retiree.

The interesting thing is that the retiree can name anyone as his or her beneficiary. It can be the retiree's domestic partner. It could even be a total stranger down the street.

We encourage state and local government employees who are approaching retirement to investigate these retirement benefits. They can obtain information from their employer's personnel office or they may contact PERS. The PERS contact information is as follows:

The Public Employees Retirement System
400 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 326-3000

AIDS Devastates Minorities

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that in 1998 more black gay men were diagnosed with AIDS than white gay men. This is the first time that has occurred since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic and it demonstrates the increasing toll that the disease is taking on people of color.

Researchers at the CDC said that the stigma of homosexuality plays an important role in the spread of AIDS among people of color. Blacks and Latinos are less likely to identify themselves as gay and are less likely to seek treatment for fear of being labeled as a homosexual.

The CDC report indicated that many black and Latino men who have sex with men do not identify themselves as gay. In a survey of 8,780 HIV-infected men who had sex with other men, researchers asked, "Do you identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or other?" Twenty-four percent of the black men and eighteen percent of the Latinos considered themselves heterosexual, while only six percent of the white men in the survey considered themselves heterosexual.

This is yet one more example of the terrible toll resulting from the queer community's failure to deal directly and openly with society's underlying fear and hatred of homosexuality.

KEN PRAG

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The Fundamental Issues

Continued from page 1

Just what rights would we be securing? The right to be free of discrimination as long as we behave straight and gender-appropriate? The right for queers to be free from discrimination as long as they are straight? That's a mind-boggling concept.

This approach to gaining our rights makes no challenge to the underlying concept that homosexuality is evil. If most people still really believe homosexuality and transgenderism are sick and evil, then it's easy for the tide to turn against us. The only way to eliminate this threat is to deal directly and openly with the subject of homosexuality and transgenderism and persuade the majority of Americans that these things are not evil. This probably would cause us to lose ground in the short run, but would immensely improve the security of the rights that we gain.

Actually, most Americans still think that sex of any kind is something a little embarrassing or dirty. Aren't people nervous about open discussions of sex at the office? Aren't parents still embarrassed to talk about sex with their children? Wouldn't discussions of sexual techniques (say, the most effective ways to please your partner during sex) be frowned upon in church? There is no way that our movement can persuade society that gay sex isn't evil unless we help people understand that sex in general is a thing of beauty, not an evil.

I think the fundamental revulsion that many Americans feel toward transgendered people is the assumption that people are born with certain genitals, which locks them into certain gender roles for life. Has anyone asked why that's so? Can you think of a good reason? Unless we force the issue by asking those questions openly, the rights of transgendered people will be forever based in quicksand. Only those who dress tastefully and fool most people about their "true gender" will be safe. We need to challenge society's fundamental assumptions about the acceptability of transgenderism.

Create fundamental revisions to society's views on sex and transgenderism. Those are really big tasks, but failing to do them as we seek our rights is like building a house without a foundation. In both cases, the completed structure is pretty flimsy.

By the way, the book mentioned above is a very good read. I suggest you look it up. ✉

Register to Vote

Continued from page 1

March 7th, we have a real shot at defeating the Knight Initiative. On that day, Californians will be voting in the presidential primaries as well as on a number of propositions. Voter turnout is usually highest in November of the years when we are electing a president. Turnover is always lower in off-year elections or on primary election days.

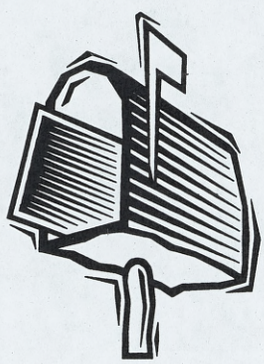
The last presidential primary in California occurred in March, 1996. In that year, according to the Secretary of State's office, only 41.9 percent of the state's registered voters came to the polls and only 31.5 percent of the eligible voters actually voted. It seems likely that the turnout will be similarly low this year.

The smaller the total turnout, the greater the chance that a determined, disciplined minority can win the day. The lower the overall turnout, the smaller the number of actual votes that we need to win the day. If our opponents turnout is low and we get all our supporters to the polls, we can defeat the Knight Initiative.

Please don't be like one of my former coworkers in the early 1980s. She is African-American. Tom Bradley, an African-American who was the former mayor of Los Angeles, was running for governor. The pre-election polls indicated that he had a shot at winning. My friend was ecstatic that we might actually elect the first African-American to be governor of California.

Bradley did not win and the day after the election my friend admitted that she just didn't get around to voting. Ever since, I have wondered how many others from her community just "didn't get around to it." Perhaps with a little more discipline they could have changed history. We probably would have been a much better state with much less racial rancor and prejudice.

Please don't make the same mistake. If you are not registered to vote, please do so before the February 7th deadline. Then do not fail to vote on March 7th. Please get all your friends to do the same. ✉



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